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Promotion and protection of human rights

**Letter dated 9 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative
of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to convey to you information on the priority attention given in the Republic of Uzbekistan to protection of the interests and rights of children (see annex).

I would appreciate it if you could have the present letter and the attached information circulated as a document of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly under agenda item 68.

(Signed) Muzaffar Madrakhimov

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Annex to the letter dated 9 July 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

On the priority attention given to protection of the interests and rights of children in the Republic of Uzbekistan

In Uzbekistan, guaranteeing the rights of the child and ensuring health care and high-quality education for children have been national policy priorities since the early days of independence. Specifically, the legal underpinnings of the national education system are designed to bring about radical educational reform and to establish and foster a national human resources training system that meets the standards of a developed country.

In 1994, Uzbekistan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it one of the first international instruments to be officially adopted. Uzbekistan has also adopted a law guaranteeing the rights of the child. All instruments relating to the interests of the child and issues related to the rights of children are addressed in accordance with international standards.

The national Healthy Mother, Healthy Child programme ensures that women and children receive special care. As part of that programme, a State programme to further enhance overall reproductive health and protect the health of mothers, children and adolescents in Uzbekistan for the period 2014-2018 has been approved. This means that all women of childbearing age, children and adolescents now receive medical check-ups, and care is provided to prevent congenital conditions.

In 2014 alone, 6.5 million children enrolled in schools and preschools, as well as students in vocational training institutions and lyceums, underwent thorough medical examinations for the purpose of early disease identification and effective response.

Vaccinations are provided free of charge in Uzbekistan to all children under 2 years of age, which has made it possible to eliminate completely such diseases as diphtheria, polio and tetanus.

Currently, 92 per cent of children in Uzbekistan meet the World Health Organization development parameters. The Save the Children Health Worker Index has ranked Uzbekistan ninth among 161 countries in quality of health care provided to children and young people.

The country also places great emphasis on high-quality education for the younger generation. Some 60 per cent of the total annual national budget is allocated to the social sphere, with half of that going to education.

A unified lifelong education system has been adopted, based on the Education Act and the Act on a National Human Resources Training Programme. Under this system, the 12 years of general and specialized secondary education and vocational education are compulsory and free of charge.

Nine years of general secondary school are followed by three years of study in a specialized vocational training institution or lyceum, where each student studies

general educational subjects and also receives training in two to three occupational skills that are in demand on the labour market. This is a central feature of the national model.

There is, in addition, a system of enrichment education, which includes schools of music, sports and art, Barkamol Avlod all-round youth development centres and special interest groups. These provide focused and useful leisure activities for children.

Since independence, a total of about 9,500 schools have been built or renovated in Uzbekistan, as have about 1,500 lyceums and other training institutions, which have also been provided with up-to-date equipment and textbooks.

In 2015, 353 general education schools are undergoing construction, reconstruction or major renovations, and a total of 147 vocational training institutions and lyceums are undergoing major renovations at a total cost of some 400 billion sum. There are plans to build, rebuild or do major renovations on 500 general education schools by 2020, to include construction of 101 new schools. Major renovations to 810 vocational training institutions and lyceums are also planned.

Uzbekistan was ranked fifth in the world for the level of development of its education system in a 2012 study of human capital conducted by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the European Institute of Business Administration (INSEAD), one of the most prominent international business schools in the world.

In accordance with article 77 of the Labour Code of Uzbekistan, anyone who is 16 years of age or older may be legally employed. Under the Education Act, 12 years of schooling are compulsory for all children, which precludes the participation of minors in the labour market.

In 2008, Uzbekistan ratified International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and in 2009 it ratified ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. Both have been successfully implemented. The Act supplementing the Administrative Liability Code in connection with improvements to the laws protecting the rights of minors was adopted in 2009. This was done to increase accountability on the part of commercial entities and individuals for violations of the ban on child labour, as well as for violations of labour law with regard to persons under the age of 18.

Accordingly, new regulations have been added to the Code, increasing accountability for officials and others for violations of labour laws and the relevant protections for minors and for the employment of minors in jobs that could harm their health, safety or morals, as well as for coercing a child to work.

Article 241 of the Labour Code prohibits the employment of persons under 18 years of age in jobs with unfavourable working conditions, those that involve work underground and other jobs that may harm the health, safety or morals of this category of worker. Persons under 18 years of age may not lift or carry loads whose weight exceeds established norms.

Appropriate measures for the effective implementation of the ILO conventions are an important item on the agenda for collective bargaining between employers and trade unions. A general agreement between the Government, the Federation of Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry on socioeconomic issues for the period from 2014 to 2016 enjoins the parties to commit to strict compliance with ILO conventions. Similar commitments are contained in collective agreements at the sectoral, regional and local levels. In particular, virtually all collective agreements include provisions on compliance with the minimum age for admission to employment and prohibition of the worst forms of child labour.

The systematic work being done in this area is ensuring the prevention of child labour. A Coordinating Council on Child Labour has been set up under the management of the Federation of Trade Unions in order to make this work more effective. It is a standing, operational civic body consisting of representatives of the stakeholder ministries and agencies, trade unions, employers' associations and other civil society institutions.

The primary purpose of the Coordinating Council is to coordinate measures and pool efforts of government bodies and civil society institutions to implement national policy to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and improve the work in this area.

Efforts to eliminate child labour in agriculture and farming, as well as in small businesses and private enterprise, are being stepped up. In particular, work is ongoing to enhance the capacity of employers, farmers, ministry and agency staff, town and district *khokims* (local executive authorities), leaders of educational institutions and chairs of women's committees and of village citizens' assemblies. The Federation of Trade Unions has taken the initiative to ensure that all managerial skills training courses include study of national and international labour standards, including ILO conventions, with particular emphasis on the Forced Labour Convention and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention. There is a focus on awareness-raising, including the issuance of special brochures and training materials. Parents' meetings are held to increase awareness among both parents and their children.

The Coordinating Council has particularly stressed monitoring to prevent child labour in various sectors of the economy. For example, cotton fields are monitored in the autumn, and businesses are monitored at other times of year. The Council also holds monthly meetings to coordinate and further develop work in these areas.